

Archives Advice No. 16

Recordkeeping Requirements for Your Micrographics Program

Considerations for Government Officials

Reformatting public records through microfilming mandates that filming processes be appropriately documented. Whether public agencies use a service bureau or an in-house filming operation, quality control must go beyond ensuring that film meets national technical standards. To remain accountable to the public, public officials should maintain records documenting the expenditure of public funds for format conversion that produces authentic, complete, and accurate microfilm, capable of substituting for the original record, and steps taken by the office to protect and preserve the film over time. Through careful process control and documentation that adequately describes and supports it, public agencies reduce the risk and liabilities associated with reformatting public records and, then are free to destroy hard copy originals.

This leaflet identifies the classes of records public officials should maintain in compliance with the requirements set out in “Standards for Microfilming Records” by the Georgia Archives, as part of a reformatting program. The media of these records is unimportant. The descriptions of the following record classes should guide creation of appropriate records, assist identification of them in the office, and establish appropriate retention periods. Retention applies to all media – microfilm, paper, and electronic.

Record Classes

Contracts with Service Bureaus

Outsourcing the production of microfilm requires the agency to establish a binding contract. The contract identifies who is performing the service and the conditions under which a product will be produced and accepted by the agency. Funding for microfilming may be provided as part of a grant program. If federal grant funding is included, all federal requirements must be met prior to the destruction of the records.

Retention: Temporary Record. Retain for 7 years after contract expiration.



GEORGIA ARCHIVES

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Quality Control and Inspection Records

Records in this class are broken down into the following areas: filming, processing, and storage. Some or all of these records may be created, depending on whether filming is outsourced or not.

Filming Records

These records include but are not limited to: production reports, activity reports, film logs, retake orders, title targets, lists of records to be filmed, job orders, vouchers, invoices, checks, and receipts. These records document the activities of a micrographics program in preparing and filming records. Financial records would be present for programs accepting outside jobs as a vendor.

Retention of production related materials: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

Retention of financial materials: Temporary Record. Retain until release of audit report and settlement of all claims due.

Processing Records

These records include but are not limited to: lab inspection forms, processing/duplicating lab reports, methylene blue testing results, film inspection reports to and from Kodak (if Kodak certified lab), chemical test results, and monitoring logs (processing). These records document the proper processing of silver gelatin and diazo films to show compliance with all technical standards. The information gathered at this stage documents resolution, density, placement, and polarity, among other details. This information is of vital importance to any later digitization project your agency has planned. Preferably, the information should be documented on a single form, a quality inspection report. A sample form is appended to this leaflet.

Retention of quality inspection report: Retain for life of microfilm.

Retention of all other records: Temporary Record. Retain for 7 years.

Storage Records

These records include but are not limited to: hygrothermograph charts, record of alarms or problems, vault transmittal/evaluation records, vault inventory log, film sample documentation/annual master negative inspection reports, inventory of duplicating masters, and condition reports on reference copies of microfilm.

Public officials have the option of contracting with a vendor for the storage of master negative film or storing film with the Georgia Archives. In either case, copies of vault transmittal forms should exist. Copies of annual vault inspections that monitor the condition of stored film may be requested by the public official to show the condition of the agency's film.

Retention of transmittal/evaluation reports: Retain for life of microfilm.

Retention of vault monitoring records: Temporary Record. Retain for 5 years. Agencies wishing to track storage environmental conditions for periods longer than 5 years may choose to retain hygrothermograph charts, etc. for up to 10 years.

Retention of annual master negative inspection reports: Permanent Record.

Retention of inventories and condition reports of duplicating masters and reference copies: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures that control and organize microfilming are crucial elements that must be documented. An operations manual should exist and provide staff with step-by-step guidance in the creation of agency microfilm. The manual should cite relevant national standards and contain samples of completed forms to ensure quality record keeping for future uses.

Retention of policies and procedures: Permanent Record.

Documenting the Destruction of Originals

After the filming, processing, and quality control processes are completed, original records may be destroyed. Prior to any destruction, a destruction notice or some form of documentation must be completed. This documentation may consist of a notation on an electronic inventory of records or a formal notice. The following information should be captured: title of records, inventory of folders or volumes (etc.), inclusive dates of records, date of destruction, authorization for destruction, and roll numbers of film replacing the record.

Destruction of microfilm of non-permanent records whose retention period has been met should also be documented. Silver gelatin films may be recycled using a silver reclamation process developed by Kodak. At the time of destruction, all records documenting the roll of film should be destroyed.

Access

O.C.G.A. §50-18-70 *et seq.*, the Open Records Act which became effective in July 1999, has changed the way public officials may respond to a public inquiry into the business of an agency. Under current law, an answer must be provided to a citizen within a three-day period. All vendors holding government contracts must likewise respond to a citizen's request regarding the business a vendor does on behalf of government. Service bureau contracts should include a clause addressing access to the records being filmed and access to the records documenting the filming. Access restrictions on records being filmed do not alter the requirement that records documenting the filming must be created and made accessible.

In the Future: Digitizing Your Film

A discussion of the merits and processes involved in converting microfilm to scanned digital images is inappropriate for this leaflet. There are a number of issues; however that can be addressed here to ensure that film will lend itself to scanning in the future. Film characteristics and costs are two important factors when considering future digitization. The characteristics of the film itself will determine in large part the quality of the resulting digital images; it will also directly affect how automatic – and therefore how expensive – the scanning process is likely to be. The best guarantee of both digital image quality and cost containment is to produce microfilm that meets very high technical quality standards and to maintain the records documenting the adherence to these standards. Vendors of conversion services require very specific information on the composition and characteristics of the microfilm in order to determine the quality and costs of digital output. The time and effort spent in setting up and adjusting the scanner for automatic conversion is greatly reduced if technical information about the filming process is readily available.

If you need further assistance, please call the Georgia Archives at (678) 364-3795.